Project Proposal

Proposal Title: **Wildcat Sagebrush Restoration Project Phase II** **Proposal Number:** 1392

DWR Region: Southeastern Region **Lead Agency:** USFS **County:** Emery

Project Manager: Kevin Albrecht **PM Phone:** 4356133717 **Regional Priority:** Within Focus Area

Project Type: Terrestrial Habitat **Proposed Start Date:** 08/01/2009

Project Location: Approximately 6 miles northwest of the town of Emery, Utah.

Project Description: Mechanically treat a mosaic of sagebrush on 1000 acres to promote a variety of age classes in sagebrush stands and invigorate under-story growth.

Description of Problem/Need: The Wildcat Sagebrush Restoration Project area is in the southeastern portion of the Ferron Ranger District. The project area consists of sagebrush steppe species that had smooth brome (Bromus inermis) and crested wheatgrass (Agropyron cristatum) sewn in the 1950's thru the 1990's to increase forage for domestic cattle. Due to previous grazing practices and the lack of disturbance (wild fire) this area is comprised of a single age class of decadent sagebrush. The project area is winter range for Rocky Mountain elk (Cervus canadensis) as well as transitional range for mule deer (Odocoileus hemionus). It is also habitat for several greater sage grouse (Centrocercus urophasianus). The treatment is designed to create a mosaic stand of various sagebrush age classes and to reduce the quantity of crested wheatgrass, thus increasing the amount of native grasses and forbs that are more beneficial to sage grouse and other wildlife species.

The Wildcat Knoll area is critical sage grouse breeding and nesting habitat. It is one of only three active sage grouse leks on the Manti-La Sal National Forest. The sage grouse numbers have drastically declined in the western United States over the past 20 years and the sage grouse on the Manti-La Sal are no exception.

A secondary benefit of this project is to reduce the likelihood of a large stand replacing fire in the sagebrush by creating a mosaic of younger more vibrant sagebrush. The younger sagebrush will have less dead and decadent fuels associated with it and therefore will be more fire resistant. This will also provide for a higher degree of public as well as firefighter safety.

Objectives: The District Ranger for the Ferron District of the Manti-La Sal National Forest has determined several specific needs on National Forest System land to address the vegetative conditions in the Wildcat Knolls Project Area:

·A need to restore sage grouse habitat in the Wildcat Knolls Area. Deer and Elk winter range will be improved as well as restoration of the sage grouse habitat.
·A need to increase the amount of native grasses and forbs and decrease the non-native smooth brome and crested wheatgrass.

Relevance to Strategic Plans: This project will also be part of effort to reduce the amount of fuels and decrease fire severity within the project area. Another portion of this project will be to place water troughs throughout the grazing pastures to distribute the livestock and in turn will benefit sage grouse. Sage brush Steppe is a WAP focus area.
Carbon and Emery Counties Sage Grouse Plan
Wildcat Grazing Management Plan
Manti-La Sal Forest Management Plan
Wildlife Action Plan
Utah Partners in Flight

Potential Risks: Postponement of funding would cause a delay in treatment could cause devastating effects to grazing rotation, due to the different phases of the project that are aligned with the grazing rest rotation.

Proposed Methods: The Proposed Action would apply mechanized Dixie harrow and agricultural discs on approximately 1000 acres of the 3300 acres of phase II project area. Treatments will encompass 10-20% of the sagebrush and 20-50% of the crested wheatgrass monocultures and reseed with a variety of forb species to enhance sage grouse brood rearing and nesting habitat. Mechanically treat a mosaic of sagebrush within the project area to promote a variety of age classes in sagebrush stands and invigorate under-story growth. This will be conducted over multiple seasons and treated areas would be rested from livestock grazing for one growing season following implementation to allow establishment of seeding and sagebrush restoration.
The other part of the habitat project is water trough placement to move cattle distribution in the allotments away from nesting and brooding habitats. The water troughs will have valves so that we can turn them on and off and move cattle throughout the allotment to better manage grazing. A spring box will be built and water will be piped throughout the project area to strategically placed troughs.

Shapefile Name: HPD 2010\GIS Shape Files - Proposals\SER\1392.shp **Seed Source:** GBRC

UPCD Reg Team Coord Date: 12/02/2008

Proposed NEPA Action:

Project Proposal

Proposed Arch Action:

☑ **Vegetation Monitoring** ☑ **Wildlife Monitoring**

Monitoring Information: Yearly sage grouse monitoring will continue. Yearly migratory bird surveys within the project area. Utah State University and UDWR have put in separate vegetation monitoring plots in the area. There is a UDWR range trend study plot in the project area (16C-31). Utah State University graduate student Chris Perkins (sage grouse radio telemetry), basic sage grouse ecology.

Grazing Management: Grazing pasture will be rested for one full growing season following treatment.

SPECIES BENEFITING

Greater Sage-grouse	Elk	Mule Deer

LAND OWNERSHIP

Owner		Acres
USFS		1000
	Total	1000

PROPOSED FUNDING

Source		Amount Requested	Date Approved	Amount Approved
DNR Watershed (FY10)		$108,000.00		$0.00
USFS		$38,464.00		$0.00
Wolverine Oil and Gas		$10,000.00		$0.00
Arch Coal		$60,000.00		$0.00
	Totals	***$216,464.00***		***$0.00***

PROPOSED BUDGET

Item	Description		DWR Account	In Kind/ Partner Contrib.
Personal Services	2 wildlife technicians as equipment operators		$28,464.00	$0.00
Equipment Rental			$18,000.00	$10,000.00
Materials and Supplies	Fuel		$0.00	$10,000.00
Seed (GBRC)	1000 acres @ $90/acre		$90,000.00	$0.00
Other	Water trough construction		$0.00	$60,000.00
		Totals	***$136,464.00***	***$80,000.00***

Project Map: